

From Prosecutor to Advocate

Hebrews 7

(Heb. 7:24-25) ²⁴ but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. ²⁵ Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

If our world hopes to escape from its present conflicts it must rediscover the truth that God's sovereignty stands above the human rights of the individual.

We either return to the God of the Bible or perish in the fires of societal conflict.

Even as far back in 1976 theologian Carl F. Henry in volume 1 of his work, *God, Revelation, and Authority* wrote, "*No fact of contemporary Western life is more evident than the growing distrust of final truth and its implacable questioning of any sure word.*" (Vol. 1 page 1)

In fact, the inspiration and inerrancy of God's truth has been questioned so much by society, and even certain pockets of Christianity, that churches are reluctant to say exactly what they believe about the nature of the Bible.

We must never forget that the doctrine of the authority of Scripture bequeathed to us by the Reformers (*sola Scriptura*) declares that we can have confidence in God's word as the only sure and absolute guide, even in the most uncertain of times.

We must not capitulate to demands from society or denominational leadership, for the church to exalt social issues above the will and self-revelation of God.

We are God's people ...

... we are those who confess with the faithful throughout the centuries that when Scripture speaks, God speaks ...

... and God does not reveal and preserve what could have otherwise be left unsaid.

... every word is essential.

You may not think this is important to today's discussion, but it is.

Without the authority of Scripture our convictions will mirror the secular, godless convictions of this unbelieving world.

... and that is where we are.

In recent years we have seen churches, ministries, and denominations jettison objective truth, neglect the gospel of grace and redemption, and leap down a rabbit hole not even Alice would dare to explore.

About 15 years ago, a study done at UNC identified something they called “**Moralistic Therapeutic Deism**” (or MTD)

MTD consists of beliefs like:

- A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth and that god wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other as taught by most world religions.
- The central goal of life is to be happy and feel good about one’s self and a god isn’t necessarily needed in your life except when needed to resolve a problem.
- Good people go to heaven when they die.

Therefore, the churches primary focus needs to be promoting fairness, assist people in being happy and feeling good about themselves, and helping people solve life issue problems.

As Christians we love our neighbor as our self, and we want justice and help for all.

The church exists to call people to Christ so that they can know the power of His saving grace, not merely to provide therapeutic solutions for the momentary issues that people experience.

Humanity’s primary problem is not pathological, it is spiritual.

We need more than treatment ... we need supernatural transformation.

We need to be rescued from sin and our sinfulness.

... This is exactly what Hebrews 7 is all about... I want to ask and answer 2 questions today.

- Why is Jesus a Priest?
- How able is Jesus to save?

Now, after spending 16 verses describing the mysterious priest Melchizedek, that Abraham met in Genesis 14 the author of Hebrews writes ...

17 For it is attested of Him, "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK." (Heb. 7:17)

Hebrews is the first place in the New Testament where Jesus is explicitly called a priest.

... we have seen Christ acting as a priest (as in John 17) but it not until here that we know if for certain.

1. Why is Jesus a Priest?

The answer to the question would be obvious to a Jewish person but not so much to us.

Imagine with me what it would be like to visit Israel on the day of Atonement.

... and you are being led by a Jewish guide who is trying to explain what you are seeing.

You would see a man wearing priestly robes with a priceless, gem-studded breastplate.

His robes would sweep the ground hemmed with bells and pomegranates.

You would be told that this man was the High Priest and that this was the day that Israel was going to be ceremonially cleansed from their sins.

You would see a bull and a couple of goats being prepared to be sacrificed.

You would probably ask, "what is happening?"

"On this day and only on this day of the year our high priest will be permitted to go through the holy place into the holy of holies which was covered by a curtain ...

... on this day and only this day the High Priest will stand in the Holy of Holies in the immediate presence of God.

Do you see that fiery cloudy pillar ... that is the Shekinah glory of God ...

... it is the visible evidence that the living God has taken up residence and it rests over the mercy seat, on the ark of the covenant, between the cherubim."

Oh, what's he going to do in there?

"Well the High Priest will take those two goats and he will kill one of them and sprinkle it's blood on the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant..."

... then he will come back out and take the remaining goat and he will confess all our sins over the head of that goat. (This is where we get the concept of a scape goat.)

... that live goat will be led out into the desert, bearing our sins, and left there to die abandoned and alone.

... So, our sins are cleansed and carried away for another year.

So, what is the bull for then?

"Oh, I forgot to tell you about that. The bullock is for the priest.

... Before he can do anything about our sin, he has to do something about his own sins ... that's what the bullock is for."

So, 2 small goats for all the people but one great big bull for the sins of the priest. That doesn't make sense.

"Well you see, sin in us is bad enough, but sin in the priest is far more serious because he must represent God to the people and the people to God."

That is why Jesus, who is all man and all God must be our High Priest because we need someone who can reveal God to us ... and someone who can adequately represent us to God.

So, on the Day of Atonement the Levite would offer this sacrifice and this sacrificed too place year after year, over and over again.

And when that Levite High Priest died, then another one would take his place ... generation after generation.

But the writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is not a Levite, he is from the tribe of Judah ...

... and Jesus is not a after the order of Aaron but instead after the order of Melchizedek.

- The Levites were Jewish priests, Melchizedek's priesthood was universal.
- The Levites were temporary, they lived died, and someone else took their place, but Melchizedek had no beginning nor end so he was eternal.
- The Levites were just priests, Melchizedek was priest and king.

The priesthood of Jesus is **universal**, the priesthood of Jesus is **eternal**, (Jesus continues forever and holds his priesthood permanently) ...

... and most importantly Jesus is both **priest and king**.

2. How able is Jesus to save?

(Heb. 7:24-25)²⁴ but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently.²⁵ Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him

Notice the words "forever" and "permanently"

The priesthood of Jesus Christ is both **unchangeable** and **uninterrupted**.

¹⁹ (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.²⁰ And inasmuch as it was not without an oath²¹ (for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, "THE LORD HAS SWORN AND WILL NOT CHANGE HIS MIND, 'YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER "');²² so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. (Heb. 7:19-22)

The law made nothing perfect ...

... If the law is all there is **then God is only prosecutor** and we are all hopeless guilty in our sins.

... the wages of sin is death ...

... for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God ...

But God has provided a better priest than Aaron ... and according to the quote from Psalm 110 Jesus is from the order of Melchizedek and **WILL BE OUR HIGH PRIEST FOREVER!!!**

Jesus is mediator of a better covenant!

Jesus stands between us and God the Father ... **AND THAT IS UNCHANGEABLE!**

... and it gets even better.

Because Jesus's Priesthood is **unchangeable permanent and uninterrupted...**

... His priesthood cannot be altered or transferred to someone else.

... The priestly work of Jesus Christ will not, and cannot, be delegated to someone else.

No pope or priest can take the place of Jesus Christ

No priest can forgive your sins, or shut the doors of heaven.

The minister does not stand between the people and God ... only Jesus can do that.

The mediatorial work of Jesus Christ is His work and His alone ...

...Therefore, He is able to save us.

... and notice how powerful His ability to save really is.

(Heb. 7:25-27) ²⁵ Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. ²⁶ For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; ²⁷ who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

“Therefore, He is able to save,” this means literally “able to keep on saving.”

We are saved by being delivered from the penalty of sin (**past**) the power of sin (**present**) and the presence of sin (**future**.)

... and the writer of Hebrews describes the character of Jesus Christ to further illustrate just how “able” Jesus is to save us.

Jesus is **holy and innocent** that means that he is able to save us from the **condemnation and guilt** of sin.

Jesus is **undefiled** which means he is able to keep on saving us from the **power and defilement** of our sins.

Jesus is **separated and exalted** which means he will ultimately save us from this sinful world.

In verse 25 you see the phrase “*He is able also to save forever those who draw near*” the old KJV translated it this way:

He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him

... “to the uttermost” ... I love that! This word further stresses the eternal wonder and power of Jesus ability to save and keep on saving.

Jesus is:

- able to sympathize (Heb. 4:15)
- able to succor [strengthen and support] (Heb. 2:18)
- able to make you stand (Rom. 14:4)
- able to stablish you (Rom. 16:25)
- able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless (Jude 24)

- able to make all grace abound toward you” (2 Cor. 9:8)
- able to keep you (2 Tim. 1:12)
- able to build you up” (Acts 20:32)
- able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20).

If Jesus can do all of this (**and He can**) then why are we trying so hard to save ourselves trusting in all our self-righteous deeds?

Years ago, I was at the deathbed of a man in Indiana PA and he asked me, “do you think I’ve done enough?”

... I was too young and naïve back then to know how to answer that man but I know the answer now...

NO! You haven’t **done enough**, you **can’t do** enough ... you **don’t need** to do enough

Jesus has done it for you!!!

This the power of the cross
 Christ became sin for us
 Took the blame, bore the wrath
So Now ... We stand forgiven at the cross

The work of salvation was never ours to do ... that work belongs to Jesus Christ ... and let me tell you my brother and sister... HE DOES IT WELL!

⁵Even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, (Eph. 2:5-6)

The only way that you or I can ever stand on higher holy ground is because Jesus is already there, and in mercy He raises us to it.

(Heb. 7:25) ²⁵ Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

The reason why our Lord is able thus to save completely and to the uttermost is because He is making intercession for us.

What does that word “intercession” mean?

... It means advocate ... someone who is pleading your case.

I used to think that when I would sin and do wrong that Jesus would go before the Father and plead for mercy for me.

“Father, I know Nathan has done wrong again, but please be merciful and forgive him.”

... mercy means you may or may not get it.

You’ve heard the story of the widow mother who pleaded before Napoleon that the little general would give her son mercy and Napoleon said, “madam your son fell asleep on his watch, he doesn’t deserve mercy.” To which the old woman replied, “General if he deserved it, it wouldn’t be mercy.”

I used to think that Jesus’ intercessory work was going before God when we did wrong, and begging the heavenly Father to give us mercy.

...NO!!!

The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus offered the sacrifice of sin “once for all.”

The intercessory (advocacy) work of Jesus Christ is not pleading for mercy, it is pleading for justice.

Father I have given my life as a sacrifice “once for all” and I know you are just therefore you would never demand 2 payments for the same debt...

... and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. (Heb. 12:24)

Abel’s blood was crying from the ground for justice ...

... Jesus says to us today, “My covenant is better, my blood declares your innocency.”